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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000629

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, PRM, DRL; NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [ID](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: ROHINGYAS TREATED WELL IN INDONESIA, INTERNATIONAL  
ACCESS GRANTED

REF: JAKARTA 192 AND PREVIOUS

11. (U) This is an Action Request--see Para 9. It was coordinated with Consulate Medan and is Sensitive but Unclassified.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Indonesia's Department of Foreign Affairs (Deplu) has given the International Organization for Migration (IOM) access for the first time to the second group of 195 Rohingya/Bangladeshi refugee boat people stranded in Aceh. IOM is currently interviewing this group and supervising management of the camp. Labatt visited the camp on March 16, finding that residents were well treated. Beginning April 14, UNHCR will send two teams to interview all of the nearly 400 refugees in the two camps in Aceh. IOM is hoping for more funding from donors--including PRM--in order to cover the cost of caring for the refugees. Please see Action Request in para 9. END SUMMARY.

IOM WORKING IN ACEH WITH ROHINGYAS

13. (SBU) There is positive news regarding the Rohingya refugees in Indonesia. IOM is now present at a second Rohingya/Bangladeshi refugee camp after Deplu gave permission for IOM to have access to the nearly 195 refugees who were rescued by Indonesian fishermen at Idirayeuk, East Aceh, on February 2. A joint verification team from Deplu, IOM and the Immigration Department visited this camp on April 3, and IOM will now take over its management, including care of the refugees. Since January 28, IOM also has been managing the care for 193 refugees rescued by the Indonesian Navy off Sabang Island on January 7 (see reftel).

14. (SBU) IOM reported that the refugees in East Aceh are all in good health. It says it would complete its initial assessment on April 6. IOM was accompanied by Deplu authorities and will maintain staff at this camp for the long-term, except for a few days around the April 9 national legislative election day. The Idirayeuk camp is located in a small yard behind the subdistrict head's office, which is also a polling place.

15. (SBU) In a March 16 visit to the camp with a Rohingya interpreter, Labatt interviewed many of the refugees and found that they were deeply traumatized by their odyssey, but extremely happy with the way the Indonesian community was treating them. The cramped but healthy camp was run by the local Red Cross and troops of boy and girl scouts, along with community volunteers. Despite very little funding to operate the camp, Indonesian charities were providing for their needs and the community was delivering fresh fish for protein. "Thank Allah for the Indonesians" was a common refrain. We donated sports equipment, one item that is sorely lacking.

UNHCR INVOLVED

¶16. (SBU) We also documented on videotape how frightened the Rohingyas are to return to Burma. They cited past imprisonment, beatings and deprivation of civil liberties, such as the right to marry. Some asserted that they would certainly be imprisoned or executed if they returned home. The Bangladeshis in the group were more willing to go home and a few of the Rohingyas also said they would be willing to go home even if just to see their families again. Others said they had no idea of the ordeal they would face when they left home, some of the men crying as they recalled their near deaths at sea.

¶17. (SBU) The only complaint was that the Indonesians were not allowing them to call home to inform their families that they were fine. Labatt let two of the refugees call home using his cell phone, the first news that these families had that they were alive. We took family contact information for more than a hundred refugees, and passed this to IOM and UNHCR.

¶18. (SBU) Deplu is anxious for UNHCR and IOM to complete the interviews before the Bali Process ministerial begins in Bali on April, UNHCR told us. April 17 will be devoted to a working group on the Rohingya issue, IOM said. Deplu has not indicated what long-term solution the Indonesian government envisions.

ACTION REQUEST -- MORE SUPPORT NEEDED

¶19. (U) IOM told Labatt that it already has used USD 100,000 to date from other IOM program funds to care for the

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refugees. It has verbal promises of international donor funding, but needs more funding in hand right away. Australia is likely to announce USD 230,000 during the Bali Process conference, IOM told Labatt. IOM has submitted several budget scenarios to PRM and is still very much in need of at least USD 200,000 from PRM. Should Deplu allow the refugees to be moved to another camp, costs will be at the higher end of the budget estimates. IOM said the USD 15,000 PRM already provided did help. Mission would appreciate prompt consideration of the latest IOM budget request.

HUME